797 speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder
754 Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham,
Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port
177 Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had
184] little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they
609 came to regard the people of the west—whom they called
186 *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since,
[152] resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

797 Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission
● 728 in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the
722 mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack
609 did not occur.

186 As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded
[592] as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister
[835 tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to
684] mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirrirri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

582 The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its
835 origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between
582 whom marriage was permitted were actually members of
835 the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their
152 neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that
186 were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of
[266] them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

628 Murrkundi to lead the way because he wished to go into the
689 bushes for a few moments. Unsuspectingly Murrkundi fell
687 into the trap, and as he passed by, Burramai drove a spear through his arm and another into his back. Mortally wounded, Murrkundi fell to the ground and asked: 'What is all this about? Why have you speared me?'

'You know well enough. This is of your own making. When I was drinking I saw your reflection in the water as you fitted your spear to kill me.'

'If you think I intended to spear you, you are wrong. I never pointed the spear at you, I merely hooked it to my spear-thrower and pointed it away into the bush.'

'Well, I'm not like you and I don't understand your actions. If I see anyone pointing a spear at me I kill him.'

And with that Burramai turned on his heel and walked off, thinking to himself: 'He's not dead yet, but by midday the sun will be hot and he will die.'

Months later Murrkundi's friends found his skeleton and [764] performed the customary ghost-laying ceremonies prior to packing the bones in bark and sending them to his horde on Elcho Island.

Burramai skilfully evaded several plots to kill him for the death of Murrkundi, until eventually a big inter-tribal gathering was held in Arnhem Bay, and was preceded by • [928] the usual peace-making ceremony in which old differences are settled. Burramai was present and went through his trial-by-ordeal and made peace with the relatives of the dead Murrkundi. Normally the matter should have ended there, but an old man went to Burramai as he sat in peace with his erstwhile enemies and abruptly reopened the dispute: 'Why did you kill Murrkundi? He didn't steal your wife or abuse your totem. Why did you spear him like a dog?' Old passions were revived. One unrestrained youth said: 'Let us finish him now.' Burramai, who was exhausted from the all-day trial-by-ordeal, then made the fatal error of

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

wives are often sisters—a relationship which is likely to be favourable to very young wives, who often are no more than ten or twelve years of age when married and go to live with their older sisters. More than likely, the mother will later follow them to the outskirts of the new family circle; there to sit by her own small fire and to be suffered in silence by her son-in-law. Young wives are married as children and are regarded by the husband almost as nieces. Older wives, according to their disposition, may treat these children kindly or force them to hew and carry and attend their whims. Older women give the younger ones rigid training in wifely duties, and the arrangement often works out happily. I have seen young wives, and old ones too, cry without restraint when they have been unable to accompany the husband on a hunting trip.

It has been said that aboriginal women are treated with constant brutality and that they play an unimportant role in the decisions of the horde. This is not so, although a wife is at the disposal of her husband and the tone of her existence depends upon his character. Stone Age woman's life is hard, like that of all Stone Age nomads, but her influence is much more important than is popularly imagined. Women join in all camp disputes—indeed, with their gossip they often cause them—and their voices can be heard above the din of shouting men and howling dogs. In peace-making ceremonies they taunt the offenders, abusing them and brandishing digging-sticks in their faces, and they urge their sons either to make peace or destroy the offender. I have seen several peace-making ceremonies collapse because women urged their men to attack the offenders who were suing for peace.

In rare instances termagants control their families and sons' families by criticizing, nagging, and threatening. Late one day I came out of the bush to a camp where Yakangaiya and his married sons were sitting quietly in

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

firing long grass to drive out edible snakes, rats, and goannas. Others searched the beaches for concealed turtle nests, which often yield from five to ten dozen eggs.

Raids are common, and as the men are killed the vendetta passes from one generation to another. Entire hordes have been exterminated, and today there are several remnants in which a couple of women or old men are all that remain from clans once large. Usually the feuds continue till the parties find it desirable to negotiate for peace to allow some ceremony to be held. Big ceremonies involving several hordes are invariably preceded by these peacemaking 'Makkarratas', for before they can sing and dance together they must adjust their differences.

For the 'makkarrata', the opposing clans take up positions about two hundred yards apart and face each other. Members of the offending horde run again and again toward the avengers, who throw spears at them. If the offence is a serious one, the killer may be killed; but the culprit uses his skill to side-step the spears, and it is seldom that these trials-by-ordeal prove fatal. Having agreed to establish peace, the avengers throw their spears as a gesture of disapproval, often with no intent to harm.

Once the avengers have thrown their spears and exhibited their indignation, a neutral party conducts the culprit to them. He reverses his spears and hands them over, turns his back and presents a thigh for a spear to be plunged into it. By the drawing of blood the crime is expiated and tension is released. Avengers and neutrals crowd round the culprit, congratulating him in the friendliest manner and ridiculing the idea of bad blood ever existing between them. Usually they make a combined camp and spend the night in singing and dancing.